**Christmas in Spain and Portugal**

Christmas in Portugal is like Christmas in Spain. At Christmas dinner, Portuguese people set extra places at the table for alminhas a penar ("the souls of the dead"). Christmas Eve is known as Nochebuena or "the Good Night." Family members gather together and eat around the Nativity scenes that are present in nearly every home. A traditional Christmas treat is 'turron', a kind of almond candy. December 28 is the feast of the Holy Innocents. Young boys of a town or village light bonfires and one of them acts as the mayor who orders people to perform civic chores such as sweeping the streets. If people don't obey these orders, they pay fines. The money of the fines are used to pay for the celebration. The children receive gifts on the feast of the Epiphany. Children leave their shoes on the windowsills and fill them with straw, carrots, and barley for the horses of the Wise Men. Balthazar is their favourite wise man, who rides a donkey and he leaves the gifts.





Jim Papanikos